

Marfa

Watch for the town of Marfa, Texas - you can see it from a distance because of the green vegetation and trees that surround the area. The railroad made good use of the well water available here and founded the town as a water stop for trains in the early 1880's. In the 1920's the population grew rapidly with the building of the Marfa Army Airfield west of town, which remained open until 1945. Today the town is a mecca for movies, art and it serves as a tourist destination between Alpine and Big Bend National Park.

Marfa began its film career in 1956 with the filming of the movie "Giant," featuring James Dean, Elizabeth Taylor, and Rock Hudson. During the filming of the movie the "stars" rented private homes outside of town, and the rest of the cast and crew stayed in the famous El Pisano hotel. During the two-month shoot the townspeople were able to come to the set and meet the actors and crew, and some were even cast as extras. More recently movies like "There Will be Blood" and "No Country For Old Men" have been shot in and around the town. The shooting of movies in the town of Marfa was only the beginning of the art movement here.

Since the 1970's the town of Marfa has attracted the attention of the art community, and in 1971, Donald Judd, the renowned minimalist from New York, was intrigued enough to spend several summers living in Marfa. Judd was so captivated by the beauty of the Texas desert that he decided to settle in Marfa for the rest of his life. Judd purchased several air hangars and moved his collection to the area, with the hope of creating a gallery that had art on permanent display. The Dia Art Foundation enabled

him to expand his unusual gallery with the purchase the old Fort Russell, and even more old airplane hangars. After his death in 1994 the Judd and Chinati Foundation have been working to continue the growth of art in the area. Some artists come to Marfa to produce their art, and others were collectors from urban areas who loved the town so much they have also decided to call Marfa home. Visitors can come to the area to view the permanent art installments or purchase work for their own collections. Every year the Chinati Foundation holds an Open House where thousands of artist, collectors, and spectators can come and view Marfa's art.

So, if you are planning a visit to West Texas to see Big Bend National Park and Alpine, but sure to stop in Marfa for a unique art experience!

Source(s):

Hoffman, Eva J. "A Guidebook to Amtrak's Sunset Limited." Flashing Yellow Guidebooks, Golden, CO, 2009.

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